

**SUMMARY OF THE
TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING
JUNE 28, 1999**

The Transition Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met on Monday, June 28, 1999, at 1:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) as part of the Fifth NELAC Annual Meeting in Saratoga Springs, NY. In the absence of the committee's chair, the meeting was led by Ms. Carol Batterton of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss items from the proposed agenda.*

INTRODUCTION

Ms. Batterton called the meeting to order by explaining the purpose of the Transition Committee, an *ad hoc* committee established to deal with issues arising during the initial implementation of National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP). The meeting proceeded with an introduction of committee members and attendees and a brief review of the agenda.

STATUS OF ACCREDITING AUTHORITIES

Ms. Jeanne Mourrain of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), reviewed the strategy for implementing NELAC accreditation in the first class of thirteen state accrediting authorities. These accrediting authorities will probably meet by teleconference on a regular basis to discuss accreditation issues that arise during the implementation of their programs. The NELAC goal is to accredit the first round of environmental laboratories within one year of approval of the accrediting authorities. It will be the responsibility of individual laboratories to decide the accrediting authority from whom they wish to seek accreditation if their home state does not offer NELAC accreditation. In the meantime, NELAP will work toward expanding the program to other states. Ms. Mourrain noted that Ms. Elizabeth Dutrow, also of USEPA, is working toward setting up training programs for laboratory assessors. While the private sector party (or parties) providing the assessor training must be approved, it has not yet been decided who will grant this approval. The NELAC On-site Assessment Committee has suggested an organization such as the Registrar Accreditation Board (RAB). A plan to provide unified and consistent training to the first class of accrediting authorities is being developed.

RESULTS OF SURVEY OF ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORIES

Mr. Jerry Parr reviewed the results of an private sector survey of environmental laboratories. The purposes of the survey were to determine how many laboratories intend to seek NELAC accreditation and how many out-of-state laboratories each accrediting authority will need to inspect. Mr. Parr noted that survey response had been severely limited with only 70 responses out of 3,784. The make-up of the 70 laboratories consisted of commercial, municipal, industrial, state, and federal agency laboratories. The overwhelming majority of those laboratories indicated that they do intend to seek accreditation. Although the majority of the respondents indicated that they do intend to seek accreditation, it is still not known how many laboratories will seek accreditation or in which States they will seek accreditation. Some laboratories are not currently

inspected. Confusion about NELAC exists. Geography appears to be the biggest driver of where laboratories will seek accreditation. Commercial laboratories are probably looking to expand their markets through NELAC accreditation. Since the top two fields of testing for which the responding laboratories intend to seek accreditation are those associated with the Clean Water Act (CWA) and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), laboratories seeking accreditation for drinking water may significantly decrease. Mr. Parr conjectured that most laboratories will seek NELAC accreditation.

REVIEW OF PROFICIENCY TEST (PT) SAMPLES FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION

Ms. Barbara Burmeister, Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene, incoming chair of the NELAC Proficiency Testing (PT) Committee, and Ms. Anne Rhyne, current chair of the PT Committee, reviewed the PT requirements for initial NELAC accreditation. Chapter 2 requires laboratories to purchase PT samples from a National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) provider. Laboratories must participate in two rounds of PT samples per year, and must have successfully analyzed two of the last three sets of PT samples to maintain accreditation. One issue confronting the NELAC PT Committee has been “how long before the initial NELAC inspection may a laboratory analyze PT samples to have that data accepted for NELAC accreditation?” Although this issue is not currently addressed in the PT standard, it has been addressed by the PT Committee at the request of the Transition Committee. Members of the PT Committee sought audience input regarding this issue and suggested that a six-month window be established. There was considerable discussion of this issue. It was suggested that the Transition Committee work together with the PT Committee to develop a concrete policy for a fixed date window within which PT sample data would be accepted for initial accreditation. The Transition Committee, with input from the PT committee and the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB), will draft a policy as soon as possible after the Fifth NELAC Annual Meeting.

REVIEW OF PROPOSED POLICY ON INITIAL NELAC INSPECTIONS

Ms. Batterton presented a draft policy on initial NELAC accreditation inspections for environmental laboratories. The initial accreditation inspection must occur following approval of accrediting authorities using the 1999 standards. The first accreditations would be issued in July 2000. Since some laboratories will not be inspected at this time, the Transition Committee has proposed that all initial accreditations be issued in July 2000 and that all inspections be completed by July 2001. The resulting “interim” accreditation status, as defined in the Chapter 4 Standard, will not be noted in the database for the initial round of accredited laboratories only.

There was brief discussion of the issue of secondary accreditation. Ms. Mourrain recommended that the Transition Committee draft a policy on this issue so that primary and secondary accreditations could be announced simultaneously. This suggestion met with committee approval.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF STANDARDS

The transition committee meeting proposed the following policies on effective date of standards:

- New or modified standard effective one year from date of adoption

- States have two years to incorporate into regulations
- Committees may propose effective date if implementation requires longer than one year.

States would have a problem citing a standard that has not been fully approved yet. The committee responded that the standards are approved immediately after the meeting. It was suggested that the wording be changed to one year from the publications of the adopted standards. The second statement was modified to read as follows “States have two years from the date of publication of the adopted standards to incorporate into regulations.”

**ACTION ITEMS
TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING
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Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Committee is to work with the PT Committee to draft guidance concerning the length of time the analysis of a PT sample would be considered usable.	As soon as possible after the meeting
2.	Committee is to write guidance that would allow primary and secondary accrediting authorities to announce accreditation of laboratories simultaneously on July 1, 2000.	12/1/99

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TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING
JUNE 28, 1999**

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